



## **TRAVERSE BAY ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION**

August 16, 2011

Mr. Julius Genachowski, Chairman  
Federal Communications Commission  
445 12<sup>th</sup> Street, SW  
Washington, DC 20554

Dear Chairman Genachowski:

The Traverse Bay Economic Development Corporation (TBEDC) strongly supports measures that will facilitate the expansion of high-speed Internet availability across Benzie, Grand Traverse, Leelanau and Kalkaska counties. Towards this end, the TBEDC is developing and executing a Regional Broadband Investment Strategy to secure the financial investments, infrastructure improvements and economic benefits that high-speed Internet access will bring to our region.

Our Regional Broadband Investment Strategy reaffirms that broadband is a critical element of infrastructure for sustainable economic growth across the rural Traverse Bay region. We estimate that high-speed connectivity will create between 5,000 and 7,500 full-time jobs and deliver an additional \$52 million in tourism dollars to our region. At the same time, it will also create new opportunities for economic development and growth by giving area businesses access to the high-tech tools they need to succeed and expand in today's economy.

A recent inventory of wireless services found that fewer than 60% of households in Benzie, Grand Traverse, Kalkaska, Leelanau and Manistee Counties have access to a high-speed Internet connection. Unfortunately, connectivity in rural northwest Michigan remains well below the state average of 78%. The lack of widespread high-speed Internet connectivity puts area businesses and consumers at a disadvantage and limits our region's ability to compete for jobs and economic development.

Our Regional Broadband Investment Strategy recognizes that the private sector must play a central role in the effort to expand access to wireless networks in rural areas. In this regard, we believe that the proposed merger between AT&T and T-Mobile is a positive development. With its approval, AT&T's plan to invest over \$8B in infrastructure for the deployment of its 4<sup>th</sup>

Generation network would lead to better coverage in rural areas and more reliable wireless services for business and residential consumers in the Traverse Bay region. Another plus would be the host of good paying jobs it could bring to rural northwest Michigan.

The Traverse Bay Economic Development Corporation believes the AT&T/T-Mobile merger would prove to be an effective complement to our own efforts to build stronger broadband networks in our region, and we ask you to approve it.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Tino Breithaupt". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Tino" and last name "Breithaupt" clearly distinguishable.

Tino Breithaupt  
Senior Vice President of Economic Development  
Traverse Bay Economic Development Corporation

CC:

Commissioner Michael Copps  
Commissioner Mignon Clyburn  
Commissioner Robert McDowell

SOURCES: Regional Broadband Strategy, <http://www.tcchamber.org/rbs>